COASTAL CONSERVANCY

Staff Recommendation
June 5, 2008

MATILIJA DAM ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION PROGRAM:
PRE-CONSTRUCTION IMPLEMENTATION

File No. 99-099
Project Manager: Bob Thiel

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Authorization to disburse up to $4,500,000 to the Ventura County Watershed Protection District to implement pre-construction elements of the Matilija Dam removal project, including acquisition of the Matilija Hot Springs Property and preparation of engineering designs for two bridge components.

LOCATION: Ventura River watershed, Ventura County (Exhibits 1 and 2).

PROGRAM CATEGORY: Resource Enhancement

EXHIBITS

Exhibit 1: Regional Location Map
Exhibit 2: Map of Project Area
Exhibit 3: Location of Project Sites
Exhibit 4: Matilija Dam and Reservoir, Aerial View
Exhibit 5: Staff Recommendation of October 27, 2005
Exhibit 6: Letters of Support

RESOLUTION AND FINDINGS:

Staff recommends that the State Coastal Conservancy adopt the following resolution, pursuant to Sections 31251-31270 of the Public Resources Code:

"The State Coastal Conservancy hereby authorizes disbursement of an amount not to exceed four million five hundred thousand dollars ($4,500,000) to the Ventura County Watershed Protection District (District) to implement several pre-construction elements of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project, including acquisition of the Matilija Hot Springs Property (Ventura County Asessessor's Parcel No. 010-0-180-430), preparation of engineering designs for two bridge components, and related pre-

construction costs associated with the two bridge components. This authorization is subject to the following conditions:

1. Prior to the disbursement of any funds, the District shall submit for the review and written approval of the Conservancy's Executive Officer a work program, budget, schedule, and the names of any contractors to be employed in carrying out the work.

2. Prior to the disbursement of any funds for the acquisition of the Matilija Hot Springs Property, the District shall submit for the review and approval of the Conservancy's Executive Officer: All relevant acquisition documents, including but not limited to, the appraisal, environmental assessments, agreement of purchase and sale, escrow instructions, title reports, and documents of title necessary to the acquisition of the Matilija Hot Springs Property.

3. In the acquisition of the Matilija Hot Springs Property, the District shall pay no more than fair market value for the property.

4. The District shall permanently dedicate the Matilija Hot Springs Property for habitat and resource protection, open space preservation, or public access consistent with Public Resources Code Section 31116(b).

5. The District shall acknowledge Conservancy funding of the acquisition of the Matilija Hot Springs Property by erecting and maintaining on that property, or at another approved location, a sign that has been reviewed and approved by the Conservancy's Executive Officer.

6. The District shall ensure that the Corps of Engineers (Corps) complies with all applicable mitigation and monitoring measures that are required by any permit and that are identified in the "Final Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report for the Matilija Dam Restoration Project" (FEIS/R), adopted by the Conservancy on October 27, 2005."

Staff further recommends that the Conservancy adopt the following findings:

"Based on the accompanying staff report and attached exhibits, the State Coastal Conservancy hereby finds that:

1. The proposed project is consistent with the purposes and criteria of Chapter 6 of Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251-31270) regarding enhancement of coastal resources and with the resolutions, findings and discussion accompanying the Conservancy authorizations of October 27, 2005, as shown in the approved recommendation attached as Exhibit 5 to this staff recommendation.
2. The proposed project is consistent with the current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines adopted by the Conservancy.

3. The project area has been identified in the certified Local Coastal Program of the County of Ventura as requiring public action to resolve existing or potential resource protection problems.
4. The proposed project remains consistent with the Conservancy's findings of October 27, 2005 regarding the environmental documentation for the Matilija Dam Restoration Project (See Exhibit 5)."

PROJECT SUMMARY:

Conservancy staff recommends that the Conservancy authorize disbursement of up to four million five hundred thousand dollars ($4,500,000) to the Ventura County Watershed Protection District ("the District") to implement several elements of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project, including acquisition of the Matilija Hot Springs Property (APN 010-0-180-430), preparation of engineering designs for two bridge components, and related pre-construction costs associated with the two bridge components.

The Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project involves the removal of the Matilija Dam on Matilija Creek, a tributary of the Ventura River in Ventura County. (See Exhibits 1, 2 and 4). Removal of the dam would restore fish passage to historic spawning and rearing habitat for southern steelhead in the upper watershed. It would also restore natural sediment transport downstream and improve sand replenishment at beaches along the coast. The Project is one of the largest dam removal projects in the country, as well as one of the largest ecosystem restoration projects ever undertaken by the Corps of Engineers (Corps) west of the Mississippi River. Of the estimated total project costs of approximately $140 million, 65 percent will be assumed by the Corps and the other 35 percent will be the responsibility of the Ventura County Watershed Protection District, the Corps's local partner. When the Project is fully implemented, the Ventura River watershed and its related estuarine and ocean habitats offshore will more closely resemble historic conditions.

One of the major features of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project includes moving or re-contouring 6 million cubic yards of sediments that are now trapped behind the dam; 2 million cubic yards are to be slurried to a designated downstream disposal site, and the remaining 4 million cubic yards are to be recontoured into sediment storage areas as source for future natural erosion and transport downstream during storm events. The dam itself will be removed by controlled blasting in 15-foot increments, and a 100-foot wide meandering channel will be constructed through what is now the reservoir area behind the dam. The project also includes constructing a high flow sediment bypass system at a water diversion downstream; building levees along parts of the river channel to protect property from flooding resulting from expected increases in stream channel elevations in the first years after the dam removal; and building a recreation trail along the alignment for the slurry pipeline.

The $4.5 million Conservancy grant to the District proposed here would fund two sub-components to the Project---each of which are critical to the ability of the District and the Corps to initiate the scheduled removal of the dam at the beginning of 2010:

(1) ***Matilija Hot Springs Property Acquisition***

The District proposes to acquire a 9.22-acre property (Ventura County APN 010-0-180-430) now in private ownership and known as Matilija Hot Springs, located along the north bank of Matilija Creek directly below the dam and upstream of adjacent property owned by the District (See Exhibit 3). The Matilija Hot Springs Property, which is currently being offered for sale by the landowner, would be seriously impacted by the construction activities relating to removal of the dam. The Property is needed as a staging area for the larger project, and most the structures and other improvements on the property will face an increased threat of flooding after the dam comes down. Following removal of the dam, the District intends to dedicate the property for public recreation, habitat and open space; the site offers opportunities to link the new trails downstream with ones upstream in the Los Padres National Forest. The District is now having the property appraised, using the Coastal Conservancy's appraisal specifications.

(2) ***Camino Cielo and Santa Ana Bridge Design***

The District would utilize approximately $1.0 million from the proposed grant to fund the design of the two bridge components included in the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project. Both of these bridge projects must be implemented to offset impacts from changes in sediment transport and flood flows due to the removal of the dam. The existing Camino Cielo Bridge is to be replaced with a new 150-foot long bridge, and the Santa Ana Boulevard Bridge is to be widened by adding another pier and bridge cell opening (See Exhibit 3). Conservancy funds would be used for permitting and other pre-construction costs associated with these two bridge projects.

These two project components would complement two other pre-construction activities that the District is undertaking: (a) the removal of *Arundo donax* from 1,100 acres along the river, beginning in the headwaters and continuing downstream to the Highway 150 bridge; and (b) the installation of two new wells downstream at Foster Park for the City of Ventura's water supply, which are needed because of the potential for increased stream turbidity that may result from dam removal project.

Site description

Matilija Dam is a 620-foot wide, concrete arch dam located inland of the coastal zone, about 16 miles upstream from the Pacific and just over half a mile from the confluence of Matilija Creek with the Ventura River. When the dam was built in 1948 (by the Ventura County Flood Control District), its height was 198 feet, but the dam has been notched twice (in 1965 and 1978) because of safety concerns, and it is now 168 feet high. Although it was constructed with a design reservoir capacity of more than 7,000 acre feet, significant sedimentation has reduced the reservoir's capacity to less than 500 acre feet. Over six million cubic yards of silts, sands, gravels, cobbles and boulders are estimated to reside behind the dam, and the reservoir is projected to fill in completely by 2020 if the dam is not removed.

Matilija Dam is responsible for a variety of adverse effects on stream ecology and wildlife. The sediment trapped by the dam has deprived downstream reaches of the sand, gravel, and more coarse-grained materials needed to sustain a suitable substrate for fish, such as riffle and pool formations, sandbars, and secondary channels. The dam has blocked river flows from the upper watershed and altered natural stream and habitat dynamics. Other problems associated with the dam include the loss of riparian and wildlife corridors between the Ventura River and Matilija Creek, and the deteriorating condition of the dam itself. But the two most serious impacts are its effect on steelhead migration and its impacts on the river's sediment budget.

The dramatic decline of Southern California steelhead trout *(Oncorhynchus mykiss)*, a federally-listed endangered species, is the major issue within the Ventura River watershed. Before Matilija Dam was built, the river ran essentially unimpeded to the ocean, and 4,000 to 5,000 adult steelhead would migrate up the river each year to spawn, comprising one of the largest steelhead runs in the region. Construction of Matilija Dam cutoff access to more than half of the river's most productive spawning and rearing habitat. Current estimates indicate that less than 100 adult steelhead remain within the Ventura River system. With the removal of Matilija Dam and the implementation of the other components of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project, steelhead and other aquatic species would gain access to 17.3 river miles of high quality habitat upstream. Conversely, upstream fish passage cannot be restored without taking down the dam, since a fish ladder is simply impractical for a dam of this height.

The second major impact---the loss of natural sediment transport---has contributed to significant beach erosion along the coast. Alluvial floodplains downstream have diminished drastically, the product of a changed flow regime and the reduced sediment supply, resulting in a depleted sand budget and eroded beaches at the estuary and along the coast. Over the last 50 years, Emma Wood State Beach, just west of the mouth of the Ventura River, has eroded approximately 150 feet---a retreat that is equivalent to an erosion rate of 2 to 3 feet per year. Surfer's Point, just down coast of the river mouth and once a broad sandy beach, is now mostly cobble. Removal of Matilija Dam will return the river to more natural conditions, increasing sediment flow downstream, creating alluvial floodplain habitat, and replenishing sand-starved beaches along the coast over the long term.

Watershed Description

The Ventura River watershed encompasses about 226 square miles and is roughly 31 miles long from its headwaters in Los Padres National Forest to its outfall into the Pacific (See Exhibit 2). The mainstem of the river, which originates at the confluence of North Fork Matilija Creek and Matilija Creek, is about 15.6 miles long. Downstream of that juncture, the river's principal tributaries are San Antonio Creek, Willis Creek, Rice Creek, Coyote Creek and Cañada Larga.

Because much of the river corridor has retained its rural character, there are numerous intact examples of riparian cottonwood, California black walnut, sycamore and oak woodlands, as well as chaparral, flood plain, and grassland habitats along the river.

Habitats in and near the River sustain one of the highest diversities of vertebrates in Southern California: nearly 300 vertebrate species have been seen in the lower reaches of the Ventura River alone. At least 26 special status species inhabit or utilize aquatic, riparian and wetland habitats in the watershed, including 13 species listed as threatened or endangered and 13 California species of special concern. In addition to southern steelhead, listed species include tidewater goby, Least Bell's vireo, Southwestern willow flycatcher, California brown pelican, California least tern, peregrine falcon, Belding's savannah sparrow, ringtail, black-shouldered kite, western snowy plover, California red-legged frog, and the California condor.

Project History:

For more than a decade, a broad coalition of local, state, federal, and private agencies have been working together to examine the feasibility of removing Matilija Dam and to secure the funding and congressional support needed to complete the project. In June 2001, the Army Corps of Engineers, in partnership with Ventura County Watershed Protection District, initiated a feasibility study to assess options to remove or modify the dam and the extent of Federal participation in the project. During the three-year study, a task force of state, federal and local officials, environmental groups, community members and water districts met frequently to determine an acceptable plan to remove the dam and the six million cubic yards of silt behind it. In an effort to reach a consensus among the many stakeholders, work groups were formed to address environmental concerns, public outreach, recreation, plan formulation, technical studies, and funding opportunities. The Feasibility Study and EIR/EIS were completed in 2004, and in July 2005 the District and the Corps approved a Project Management Plan, under which they now completing the pre-construction engineering and design phase of the project. To date, the Corps and other federal agencies have spent more than $5.6 million in federal funding on the project, and the District has contributed more than $1 million of its own funds.

The Coastal Conservancy has been an active partner in these efforts since their inception. In October 2000, the Conservancy authorized a grant of $1,750,000 to be used for consultant services to study the feasibility of removing the dam. Most of these funds were used by the Bureau of Reclamation to conduct sediment analyses and related studies. In February 2003, the Conservancy authorized $311,000 of that original grant for use by the District as the local lead, and in May 2004, the Conservancy authorized an additional $200,000 to the District to help fund its local cost share for the Corps's Feasibility Study. In October 2005, the Conservancy approved another $1 million grant to the District to help fund the local share of the engineering design effort for the project. In September 2005 the Ocean Protection Council authorized the Conservancy to contribute an additional $2 million to the Matilija project with funds that have been earmarked for ocean protection. In addition to its financial support, the Conservancy serves along with the District, the Corps, and the Bureau of Reclamation as one of the four members of the Project Management Team for the design phase.

In enacting the Water Resources Development Act (P.L. 110-114) last fall, Congress authorized implementation of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project at a total

cost of $144,500,000, with an estimated Federal cost of $89,700,000 and an estimated non-Federal cost of $54,800,000. The Corps and the District anticipate negotiating and completing a project cooperation agreement by this November. As the Corps and the District complete the engineering and design work for the project during the next 12 months, the District is initiating pre-construction site preparation work on several other elements of the project. Those elements include the construction of the Foster Park wells and the District's *Arundo* eradication and control program for the river.

PROJECT FINANCING:

Pre-construction project implementation

Land acquisition and bridge design	
Coastal Conservancy grant	$4,500,000
Foster Park wells and *Arundo* removal	
State Water Board grant (Proposition 40)	$5,000,000
Watershed Protection District	1,200,000
Total Project Cost	**$10,700,000**

Although the proposed grant would cover the total cost of the two particular project elements, it would cover less than half of the District's share of pre-construction project implementation and only a fraction of the total estimated cost of $144.5 million needed to complete the entire Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project. Under the terms of the federal legislation that has authorized implementation of the Matilija project, the proposed grant would be credited to the District's local matching funds.

The anticipated source of funds for the proposed $4.5 million grant to the District is an appropriation to the Conservancy of funds from the Water Security, Clean Drinking Water, Coastal and Beach Protection Act of 2002 (Proposition 50), which authorizes the use of such funds to protect coastal watersheds through projects that restore land and water resources. The proposed project will accomplish those objectives by implementing key components in the removal of Matilija Dam, thereby helping restore steelhead habitat and natural sediment management in the Ventura River watershed. As required by Proposition 50, the proposed project is consistent with local and regional plans (Water Code Section 79570), including the Basin Plan for the Coastal Watersheds of Los Angeles and Ventura Counties, which identifies the Ventura River as an impaired water body and mandates the protection of beneficial resources in the region's coastal watersheds.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S ENABLING LEGISLATION:

The proposed project would be undertaken pursuant to Chapter 6 of the Conservancy's enabling legislation, Division 21 of the Public Resources Code (Sections 31251-31270), regarding enhancement of coastal resources.

Under §31251 and 31251.2 , the Conservancy may award grants to public agencies for

the purpose of enhancement of coastal resources, including watershed resources that lie partly outside the coastal zone where, due to natural or human-induced events or incompatible land uses, the resources have suffered the loss of natural and scenic values. Consistent with this section, the proposed project would restore both degraded habitat in the Ventura River watershed and natural sediment supply to coastal beaches and is therefore consistent with this section. Consistent with § 31251.2, the California Department of Fish and Game has been consulted, and the project is being undertaken specifically at the request of the local public agency having jurisdiction over the entire project area (See Exhibit 6).

Consistent with Section 31252, the proposed project will address existing problems in one of the special resource areas identified in the Ventura County Local Coastal Program (LCP). Priority policies in the LCP include protection of biological productivity and quality of coastal waters, streams, wetlands, and estuaries; special protection for species of biological or economic importance; the maintenance of marine resources; and the protection and restoration of riparian areas. The proposed project will implement restoration measures to enhance and restore fish habitat and protect water quality in the coastal draining watershed of the Ventura River.

The proposed authorization is consistent with §31253, which states that the Conservancy may provide up to the total cost of any coastal resource enhancement project. As discussed in the "Project Financing" section above, the proposed grant from the Conservancy would cover the total cost of each of the particular pre-construction project components, but is only a fraction of the total construction costs for the entire Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project. In determining the amount of Conservancy funding for this project, the factors identified in §31253 have been considered and applied, as described in detail below under the heading "Consistency with Conservancy's Project Selection Criteria & Guidelines."

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS & OBJECTIVES:

Consistent with **Goal 4, Objective 4A**, the proposed project will fund the acquisition and protection of approximately 10 acres of riparian habitat, wildlife corridor and scenic resource property at Matilija Hot Springs.

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective 5A**, the proposed project will help restore and enhance an important coastal watershed by funding preparation and completion of engineering design studies that are critical to the implementation of the Matilija Dam removal and ecosystem restoration project.

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective 5B**, the proposed project will help restore and enhance a priority river corridor and its habitat by removing a key barrier to steelhead migration and natural sediment transport.

Consistent with **Goal 5, Objective 5C**, the proposed project will help enhance and restore a critical wildlife corridor that links coastal and upland habitats along the Ventura River.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective 6B,** the proposed project would assist in restoring the Ventura River, a regionally-significant coastal watershed.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective 6D**, the proposed project will assist in the removal of a major impediment to steelhead passage and the opening up more than 17 river miles of high-quality spawning and rearing habitat.

Consistent with **Goal 6, Objective 6G**, the proposed project will help implement a priority project to remove barriers to sediment transport on the Ventura River and re-establish natural sediment management along the coast of Ventura County and Southern California.

CONSISTENCY WITH CONSERVANCY'S PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA & GUIDELINES:

The proposed project is consistent with the Conservancy's current Project Selection Criteria and Guidelines:

Required Criteria

1. **Promotion of the Conservancy's statutory programs and purposes:** See the "Consistency with Conservancy's Enabling Legislation" section above.
2. **Consistency with purposes of the funding source:** See the "Project Financing" section above.
3. **Support from the public:** Removal of Matilija Dam and implementation of the Ecosystem Restoration Project has widespread public and agency support. In addition to the Corps, the District and the Coastal Conservancy, participating agencies and organizations include American Rivers, the Bureau of Reclamation, California Department of Fish and Game, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, California Trout, the Casitas Municipal Water District, the cities of Ojai and Ventura, First District County Supervisor Steve Bennett, the US Forest Service, the Matilija Coalition, the National Marine Fisheries Service, and Surfrider Foundation. Senators Barbara Boxer and Dianne Feinstein and US Representatives Lois Capps and Elton Gallegly support the project. Letters of support for this project are attached as Exhibit 6.
4. **Location:** Although the Dam itself and the three individual project sites that would be the focus of the proposed grant are all located outside the coastal zone, implementation of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project will benefit coastal resources by helping restoring runs of steelhead trout to and from the Ventura River and restoring natural sediment management to coastal beaches.
5. **Need:** Without the proposed grant, the District could not proceed with these project components. Implementation of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project will largely be funded by federal appropriations, but federal participation requires a 35 percent local cost share. Coastal Conservancy funding is critical to assist the District,

which does not have the financial resources to provide the local match without significant participation by state funding agencies.

6. **Greater-than-local interest:** The Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project is one of the largest dam removal projects in the country. It has received bipartisan political support and national press attention; it is also being followed closely by other localities and national environment organizations, who see it as a model project that will demonstrate methods to remove large dams, promote salmonid recovery, and restore natural sediment management. Removal of Matilija Dam is also a major regional priority of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project.

Additional Criteria

7. **Urgency:** Immediate funding for the three components of the proposed grant is critical if the Corps and the District are to maintain their schedule for implementation of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project.
8. **Resolution of more than one issue:** The Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project will address coastal and watershed resource protection, habitat restoration, endangered species recovery, public recreation, and coastal sediment management.
9. **Innovation:** As one of the largest and most complex dam removal projects in the county, the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project will serve as a model to demonstrate how to remove a large dam and manage the trapped sediments that are located behind it.
10. **Leverage:** See the "Project Financing" section above**.**
10. **Readiness:** The District will initiate and complete each of the project components to be funded by this proposed grant as soon as it can receive funding to do so; each component is critical to the Corps and District's schedule for actual dam removal. The Corps will complete preconstruction engineering and design work for the project this year, and the District has already initiated other pre-construction activities.
11. **Realization of prior Conservancy goals:** Implementation of this project will contribute to the fulfillment of long-standing Conservancy goals for the Ventura River. For almost a decade, the Conservancy has been involved in various analyses, feasibility studies and pre-construction engineering design efforts in support of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project. It also serves as one of the four members of the Project Management Team for the design phase of the project. In addition, the Conservancy has provided staff and financial resources for numerous other acquisition, habitat restoration and planning efforts in the Ventura River watershed.
12. **Cooperation:** The Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project is a cooperative venture involving a broad range of stakeholders, including local, regional, state and federal agencies, private citizens and environmental groups.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM POLICIES:

The project is consistent with the Ventura County Local Coastal Program, which requires the County of Ventura to "work in close cooperation with other agencies and jurisdictions to provide comprehensive and biologically sound management of coastal wetlands." The project will have positive impacts on the biological productivity of the Ventura River, including the wetlands at and near the estuary. It will also be consistent with the objective in the County's LCP "to protect wetlands. . .and encourage their. . .restoration and enhancement by the State to perpetuate their value to onshore and nearshore coastal life. . ."

The project is also consistent with the policy goals of the Local Coastal Program of the City of San Buenaventura (the City of Ventura). The City's LCP includes policies which stress protection of the natural attributes and wildlife of the Ventura River (3.1), preservation of the Ventura River in its existing semi-natural state and its restoration to natural conditions (Policy 13.1), and cooperation with the Coastal Conservancy to protect and enhance the Ventura River estuary (policy 15.8).

The project would promote several major regional goals and Ventura County objectives in the Regional Strategy of the Southern California Wetlands Recovery Project. The project would help implement one the County's key objectives: enhancing steelhead habitat in the Ventura River by removing or modifying Matilija Dam. The project would also promote at least three of the six Regional Goals of the Wetlands Recovery Project: restoring stream corridors in coastal watersheds, recovering native habitat and species diversity, and integrating wetlands recovery with other public objectives.

The California Coastal Commission has established a phased review of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project with the Corps of Engineers under the Coastal Zone Management Act. In October 2004 the Coastal Commission concurred with the Corps's determination that project is consistent to the maximum extent practicable with the state's Coastal Management Program; that concurrence is subject to the Corps's agreement to submit a subsequent determination for final project design.

CONSISTENCY WITH LOCAL WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN/ STATE WATER QUALITY CONTROL PLAN:

According to the Integrated Regional Watershed Management Plan of the Watersheds Coalition of Ventura County (2006, at 234), the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Study "is currently the single most comprehensive long-range planning and implementation project for the Ventura River. This plan has subsumed all previous watershed-wide plans. It also assumes that the Matilija Dam removal is the linchpin project for any viable ecosystem recovery. It is community-based and has resulted in an unprecedented agreement between disparate stakeholders on a long-range strategy for ecosystem protection while meeting the safety and supply needs of the community at large." Implementation of the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project is also consistent with the objectives of the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board, which has classified the Ventura River as a Category I (impaired) watershed and listed the fish passage barrier created by Matilija Dam as one of its 303(d) impairments.

COMPLIANCE WITH CEQA:

The proposed project remains consistent with the October 27, 2005 Conservancy findings for and its approval of the Environmental Impact Statement and Environmental Impact Report for the Matilija Dam Ecosystem Restoration Project (See Exhibit 5). Acquisition of the Matilija Hot Springs property is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in that it involves the acquisition of land for open space and wildlife habitat purposes, to preserve existing natural conditions (14 Cal. Code of Regulations Section 15325). Staff will file a CEQA Notice of Exemption upon Conservancy approval of the project